

HYS Family News and Updates

WHO'S IN YOUR FAMILY?

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The family committee would like to continue providing valuable information to our parents and concepts of the Sanctuary Principles that we utilize, to educate and work on in treatment to help your children overcome issues related to emotions, feelings, interpersonal skills that will help them in forming positive and productive relationships in their lives. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us at 814-899-7664 x347

OPEN COMMUNICATION

Harborcreek Youth Services (HYS) is a Sanctuary certified organization. One of the seven commitments of the Sanctuary model is a commitment to **Open Communication**. At present, HYS is emphasizing the importance of open communication in all facets of our work. This includes activities for our youth to teach and model open communication skills as well as a review for staff in all departments on how to

perpetuate a culture of open communication.

As you likely know, open communication is a necessary ingredient for family life as well. Open communication is saying what we mean but not being mean in the way we say it. This balance can take practice. Below you will find links to additional explanations and resources that help explain and find that balance.

The first linked document is a description of Open Communication and what it

means to have A Culture of Open Communication.

One of the most common tools for achieving open communication is the use of "I" statements or "I" messages. The second link will lead to a website that explains these statements and how they are intended to be used. The final linked document is an "I" statement worksheet to practice constructing these messages.

CULTURE OF OPEN COMMUNICATION

OPEN COMMUNICATION –

Overcoming barriers to healthy communication, reduce acting-out, enhances self-protective and self-correcting skills and teaches healthy boundaries.

"I" Message



Why is open communication important? Only if we are committed to open communication can we effectively work out our problems, resolve conflict and help support each other. Unresolved conflict always settles in the client population and impairs relationships on the team (another term for this is collective disturbance). We have to be

courageous enough to speak openly. Open communication is saying what we mean and not being mean in the way we say it. Everyone must have the power to speak their own truth & resolve conflict as individuals and as a team. It gives everyone a chance to share and express their own thoughts or feelings with confidence.

An "I" message or "I" statement is a style of communication that focuses on the feelings or beliefs of the speaker rather than thoughts and characteristics that the speaker attributes to the listener. For example, a person might say to his or her partner, "I feel abandoned and worried when you consistently come home late without calling" instead of demanding, "Why are you never home on time?"

Role of "I" Statements in Communication

Thomas Gordon developed the concept of an "I" statement in the 1960s and contrasted these statements to "you" statements, which shift blame and attributions to the listener. "I" statements enable speakers to be assertive without making accusations, which can often make listeners feel **defensive**. An "I" statement can help a person become aware of problematic behavior and generally forces the speaker to take responsibility for his or her own thoughts and feelings rather than attributing them—sometimes falsely or unfairly—to someone else.

When used correctly, "I" statements can help **foster positive communication** in relationships and may help them become stronger, as sharing feelings and thoughts in an honest and open manner can help partners grow closer on an emotional level.

"I" Statements in Therapy

Mental health professionals commonly encourage people in therapy to use "I" statements when communicating with others. This technique is particularly common in **marital counseling**, as couples often get trapped in a potentially vicious cycle of perpetual blame without ever addressing the underlying feelings or **attachment issues** that may be leading to conflict. "I" statements may allow couples to work through their disagreements in a way that allows them to express their opinions and feelings to each other without assigning blame and placing further strain on the relationship.

Couples in the early stages of marital counseling may misuse "I" statements. For example, a man might say to his partner, "I hate it when you do not listen to me." Although this statement does start with "I," it might still be interpreted as accusatory and may not be the healthiest way to express feelings. A better "I" statement might be, "When you do not listen to what I am saying, I feel ignored and unloved." Therapists often help those they are treating to practice appropriate "I" statements and explore ways to respond to the feelings that these statements communicate.

"I" statements are often also effective in **family counseling** because they focus on the effects of a child or parent's actions rather than on the action itself. It may be easier for family members to communicate when an action is not singled out for blame, and young adults and adolescents

in particular may be more receptive to hearing how their actions have affected others when the language used is not accusatory.

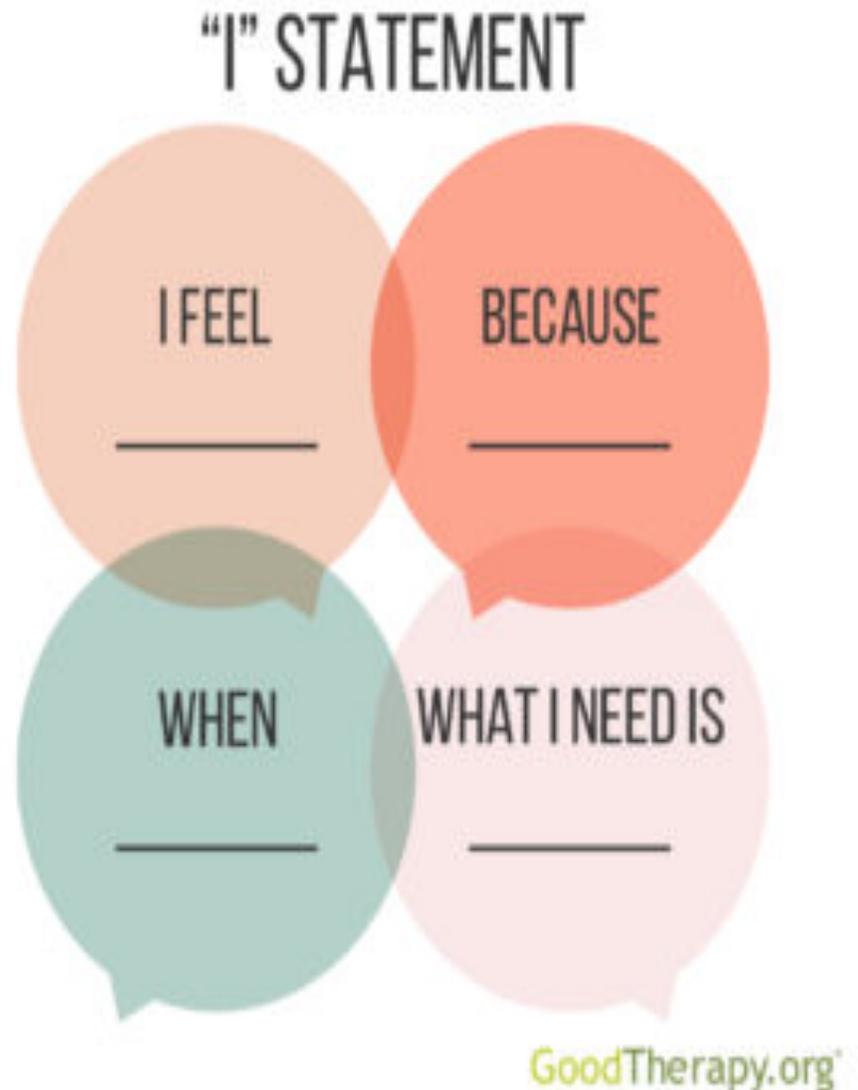
Examples of "I" Messages

Many people do not communicate naturally with "I" statements, and it often takes some practice before a person can use them effectively. That said, generally everyone can learn to use "I" messages, including children.

Some examples of "I" statements:

- A father wants his young child to stop calling him rude names during playtime.
 - Common response: "Hey! If you call me a rude name one more time, I'm going to send you straight to bed!"
 - "I" statement response: "I feel very sad when I hear rude words because they hurt my feelings. I like playing with people who use nice words."
- A woman becomes angry when her sister borrows her favorite coat and returns it with stains and a tear.
 - Common response: "You ruined my jacket! Are you ever going to grow up?!"
 - "I" statement response: "I am upset that my coat was damaged because I can't afford to replace it. I really appreciate it when the things I loan out are taken care of."
- A teenage boy is annoyed with his parents, who ask him several times each night if he has completed his homework.
 - Common response: "Lay off me!"
 - "I" statement response: "I feel frustrated and annoyed when I am reminded over and over to do my homework. I

am old enough now to complete my homework without reminders."



<https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/i-message>

Virtual Visits



We realize many parents and caregivers may live too far away or have other issues that keep them from making visits in person. We're excited to begin offering Virtual Visits, which will allow you to hear and see your child face-to-face with the help of your computer or smartphone.

Virtual Visits will be offered on Sunday afternoons between 1pm-4pm. The duration of the visit is one hour. Since spaces and availability are limited, you must call coordinator Krysia Jaworski at 814-899-7664, extension 380 for more information and to set up a time.

We look forward to growing this new program and appreciate your cooperation!



Improving Your Family Communication

Your family can provide a safe environment for family members to share feelings, thoughts, frustrations, fears, hopes and dreams. What's the single-best thing you can do to improve family communication? Make a daily effort to talk with each family member alone and together as a family. Below are additional ideas that can help you improve family communication:

1. Become a better listener. Listening is as important as talking. When you listen well to family members, you encourage them to talk about what is most important to them. Sometimes a person can find a solution to a problem or discover the source of stress just by talking. For more effective listening you should:

- Listen to the whole story. Give your family member the opportunity to communicate their thoughts, feelings, needs or desires without interrupting. Listen for understanding. Put aside your opinions, thoughts or conclusions until after you've heard what they have to say.
- Clarify meaning. Guard against assuming that you know what your family member means or feels by asking them questions to assure your understanding. Ask questions such as, "Do you mean ____?" or "I understood you to say ____."

2. Improve your talking skills. Negative talking skills can stifle communication. To express yourself more effectively you should:

- Learn to speak without attacking or blaming. Avoid starting a sentence with "you." It sounds like an accusation or an invitation to fight (which it often is). Instead, describe how a behavior or situation affects you. Say "I think..." or, "I want..." or, "I feel..." For example, "I am upset because you two are fighting a lot these days. I want to have a more pleasant atmosphere in the house."
- Describe your feelings. Don't assume that other family members know your needs, feelings and opinions without you telling them. To express yourself clearly use "feeling" words like "sad," "happy," "excited," "angry," "worried," etc.

Additional ideas that may work well for your family:

- Have a regular place and time for all family communication.
- Spend time together as a family - trips, outings, vacations, religious or family events.
- Be honest about your concerns and wishes.
- With teenagers, discuss an issue. Explain your views. Ask them theirs.
- Accept each of your children as an individual.
- Be supportive. Allow your child to make mistakes and encourage them to do their own problem solving. Work together to determine how a situation could have been better handled.
- Be aware of non-verbal communication too. Your family knows you well and will believe what your face, tone of voice and posture say more quickly than your words.
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(Source: <http://www.healthy->

exchange.com/newsletter/franciscanhealthsolutions/index_o2.php

The Impact of Effective Communication in the Family

by KAY IRELAND June 13, 2017



Kay Ireland

Kay Ireland specializes in health, fitness and lifestyle topics. She is a support worker in the neonatal intensive care and antepartum units of her local hospital and recently became a



certified group fitness instructor.

Effective communication within the family can lead to better relationships between the members of the family. It must be built on a foundation of trust, listening and understanding. The more effectively your family can communicate together, the better. It will keep you open to share thoughts and feelings, coax expression out of your children and foster a safe home environment in which all members of your family can feel comfortable and secure in their relationships.

Effective Family Communication

Outside of the home, communication is when you express your thoughts, feelings and opinions to someone else, while they listen and reciprocate. In the home, communication takes on a much more personal level. When you communicate within your family, you can expect a listening ear that can gently soothe or an honest opinion to direct you on the right path. Making sure that your family works on communication skills can keep your family tightly knit while being open and honest with each other.

Self-Esteem

The children of parents who allow them to freely express their feelings, thoughts and opinions have higher self-esteem overall, hypothesizes the University of Delaware. This is because they are raised in an environment where their thoughts and opinions are valued and recognized. When they go to school, head to extracurricular activities or participate in social events, they won't be shy to express themselves.

Expression of Feelings

Anger subsides when a child learns to effectively communicate her feelings, says the University of Florida. Learning how to effectively express feelings can reduce the arguing and yelling in a household as well as increase satisfaction and the sharing of feelings. When a family knows how to communicate effectively, then all of the members of the household learn conflict management, problem-solving skills and the sharing of thoughts and ideas.

Acting Out

Some children learn to act out or create problems for shock value when they want attention from their parents. When parents and siblings allow for better communication, there is no need for children to use those shock tactics, because they are given the time and patience to talk about their feelings and communicate their needs.

Listening Skills Development

Effective communication in the home will stay with children as they move through their lives. The communication skills of expression, listening and conflict resolution will affect their school, social and eventual professional life. They'll learn how to listen effectively, reserving judgment and showing empathy. They'll learn the right words to use when communicating with others. And most of all, they'll develop skills that will affect all of their future relationships; professional, educational and personal.

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Parenting a Child Who Has Experienced Trauma



Children who have experienced traumatic events need to feel safe and loved. All parents want to provide this kind of nurturing home for their children. However, when parents do not have an understanding of the effects of trauma, they may misinterpret their child's behavior and end up feeling frustrated or resentful. Their attempts to address troubling behavior may be ineffective or, in some cases, even harmful.

This factsheet (please visit our website www.hys-erie.org for more information-click on the news tab and then click on family news) discusses the nature of trauma, its effects on children and youth, and ways to help your child. By increasing your understanding of trauma, you can help support your child's healing, your relationship with him or her, and your family as a whole.

How Do The Arts Heal Kids?

WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY to help Pennsylvania's most vulnerable kids – many who have experienced the unthinkable. What is the answer? Research shows again and again that children who have suffered trauma benefit from expressive therapies as a way to give a "voice" to those who have none.

Art, Music, and Movement Therapies are evidence-based, therapeutic treatments that help children who:

- Have experienced both acute and chronic levels of trauma
- Have experienced the devastating effects of severe emotional problems
- Have difficulty in dealing with loss, separation, and social isolation
- Have challenges in expressing emotions, and;
- Experience blockages in learning, social-skill development, and the development of quality leisure time activities.



In addition, we have an exciting ongoing writing initiative where our kids here can join "Writer's Group" and publish a quarterly magazine called *The Haven*. Expressive therapies are an invaluable, innovative way to reach kids who deserve to have hope.

These therapies are more than just recreational activities: they are state-of-the-

art programming initiatives that no one else in the region is offering. Harborcreek Youth Services does what no one else can do: we help kids that have failed at other institutions, have nowhere else to go, and no other options for their care.



Giving a Voice to Kids After Trauma: HYS' Therapeutic Arts Initiative

"The healing we have witnessed of the kids served by the passionate and dedicated staff and administration of HYS is truly inspiring. Vikki and I have been blessed with art, music and sport throughout our lives and know it will provide another resource to help these traumatized kids thrive. We pray our gift motivates others to continue to donate so that Harborcreek Youth Services can provide these life-changing therapies."

*- Vikki & Larry Serafin (HYS Board Member)
Lead Donors, HYS Therapeutic Arts Initiative*